



## THIS COULD SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE A SCHOOL BUS HANDRAIL HANDBOOK

Since 1991, six children have died and many more have been injured because they snagged their clothing, book bags, and other items on the handrail as they exited school buses. The most common piece of clothing that can be caught on the handrail is a jacket with a drawstring at the waist. The jacket drawstrings often have a large bobble or knot at the ends that can become lodged in the handrail. Other articles, however, such as scarves, long straps on backpacks, or dangling key chains can also become entangled.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has worked to eliminate the cause of these tragic injuries and death. NHTSA began an extensive public awareness campaign targeting pupil transportation officials, school administrators, parents, and children to alert them to this danger. To date the agency has prepared four press releases, two video news releases, and a video program to discuss the role of local officials in eliminating these preventable injuries and deaths. A new booklet, *This Could Save Your Child's Life: A School Bus Handrail Handbook* shows how to detect and correct potentially dangerous handrails on school buses.

School bus handrails have had the same basic design for more than 30 years. Recent fashion trends toward oversized and baggy clothing, however, have increased the opportunity for snagging incidents. Already, school bus manufacturers have taken extraordinary and costly steps to remove snagging hazards from the entrances of school buses. More than 400,000 school buses have been recalled and manufacturers have absorbed the cost of the repairs. In most cases, a simple spacer can be added to the existing handrail that eliminates the potential for snagging. In other cases, manufacturers have

redesigned the handrail. For questions about makes and models of school buses that have been recalled, call NHTSA's *Auto Safety Hotline*, 800-424-9393.

*This Could Save Your Child's Life* presents a comprehensive view of the school bus handrail snagging problem. The booklet shows examples of handrails that are prone to snagging as well as examples of the remedies and corrections. It outlines an inspection process to detect school buses that have a potential for snagging incidents. This is the first step in eliminating the hazard.

The inspection tool itself is inexpensive and the procedure for detecting potentially fatal handrail designs is quite simple. The inspection tool is a standard 1/2 inch hex nut that measures 3/4 inch across the flats. This nut is tied to 1/8 inch thick cotton cord that is one yard long, tied with simple overhand knots. To conduct the test, the inspector stands on the ground outside of the bus and drops the tool between the handrail and wall, simulating the typical way students exit the bus. This is a drop and drag test, slowly pulling the tool through the handrail in a smooth continuous slow motion.

### HOW TO ORDER

To receive a copy of *This Could Save Your Child's Life: A School Bus Handrail Handbook*, write to the Safety Countermeasures Division, NHTSA, NTS-23, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20590, or send a fax to (202) 366-7149.

It's also on NHTSA's Homepage at:  
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses>  
or the file named *handrail.pdf* can be downloaded from <ftp://ftp.nhtsa.dot.gov/pub/nts/>

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